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# Unemployment spreads as Foreclosure storm hits major cities

By Deirdre Griswold

Sour. That's been the taste of the U.S. capitalist economy for some time now for a large and growing sector of the working class.

Real wages have been declining ever since the 1970s, so that now most families/households need more than one wage earner to get by. Pensions, paid vacations and health coverage seem like fairy tales from a golden past for millions of full-time workers, let alone the millions more who are part-time, self-employed or work for "temp" agencies.

Yet all the suffering caused by plant closings, by job losses due to high tech, and by the shift of industry and services to lower-wage, non-union areas had seemed to be off the radar-scope of establishment politics. The politicians didn't want to talk about how the high-paid CEOs of the transnational corporations would commit any crime against the workers to increase the profits raked in by their bosses.

That was yesterday. As though overnight, the economy now looms very large as a political issue as a tide of mostly younger people floods into the primaries. All the candidates of the big business parties, Democrats and Republicans, are honing their I-understand-your-pain demagoguery, hoping to catch this new wind in their sails.

It can't be avoided any longer. The evidence pointing to an economic meltdown grows stronger every day.

### Rising unemployment and the 'R' word

The most recent statistical development is a rise in the monthly unemployment rate to an official 5 percent, with a simultaneous drop in new jobs created, to only 18,000 in December. It bears remembering, however, that these figures way understate the true jobless rate in this country. They don't count the "discouraged" workers who have given up looking for work. They don't count the people who can't get enough work to survive. In fact, a person is considered employed if s/he worked just one hour in the week.

Nevertheless, the jobless statistics, as minimal as they are, do show which way things are moving. And it's down. More and more, corporate economists, government officials and pundits are using

the "R" word—recession—to describe what's coming. Some say it has already begun. David Rosenberg, Merrill Lynch's chief economist for North America, said on Jan. 9 that the unemployment figures, taken with all the other gloomy news, prove that a recession "isn't even a forecast any more but is a present-day reality."

Now, even President George W. Bush, who has avoided the people's economic problems like the plague, had to go before the cameras on Jan. 7 and talk about the "challenges" in the economy. His motive was obvious: he'll defend his tax cuts for the rich even as the national debt soars above \$9 trillion and every worthwhile government service and program is threatened with cuts.

Even as Washington was bracing for the fallout from the weakened economy, Democrats and Republicans in Congress passed Bush's "defense" budget in December—nearly \$680 billion for fiscal 2008, not counting the "supplementary" bills that come up twice a year to finance the wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This DoD budget is 10 percent larger than last year's.

With so much money already committed to war and destruction, what will be left for education, health, parks and recreation, fixing infrastructure like bridges and levees, and other useful functions of the civilian government once a recession takes hold?

Which leads to the question of how severe this downturn is expected to be.

### Mortgage storm hits major cities

By now, everyone knows about the mortgage crisis that is decimating whole neighborhoods and causing panic in city governments as "Foreclosed" signs mushroom on more and more lawns and porches.

Several million families, lured by mortgage companies into buying homes with offers of no down payment and an initial low interest rate, have now either already lost their homes or are

staring default in the face as the rates "reset" and their monthly payments double or triple.

But there's more to it than that. The foreclosure crisis is also happening at the same time that workers are being hit by a double whammy of layoffs and pay cuts as well as price increases, especially for health care and transportation.

Add the increased mortgage payments and,

*Continued to page 4*

### LONG ISLAND, N.Y.

## March against racist terror



WW PHOTOS: RICHARD KOSSALLY

Multinational crowd of a thousand gathers in Riverhead in support of John White, above speaking at podium, who was convicted after defending his family against a racist gang. See page 3 article.

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NEW ORLEANS

Campaigns launched to save public housing

By Larry Hales

The Coalition to Stop the Demolitions is calling for National Days of Action on Jan. 25 and 26. The call is to rally activists around the country to show solidarity with public-housing residents in New Orleans and to save four public-housing developments from being demolished by private developers in favor of more expensive luxurious developments.

The days of action are also meant to give attention to Senate Bill 1668, the Gulf Coast Housing Recovery Act. SB 1668 was first introduced in June 2007, almost two years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit. It would ensure the right to housing for New Orleanians displaced across the country and up to now denied the right to return to New Orleans because of poverty, lack of housing and jobs for the original inhabitants of the city.

Some of the features of the bill are that it: ensures homeowners in Louisiana can rebuild their homes by authorizing funds to cover the shortfall in the Road Home program; provides former public-housing residents the opportunity to come home and counseling to families with housing vouchers so they can obtain suitable housing; ensures there is no net loss of affordable housing opportunities by requiring that any public housing or other HUD-assisted housing in the Gulf is replaced; authorizes appropriations for the repair and rehabilitation of public housing in the Gulf Coast; provides additional affordable housing opportunities by authorizing funding for 4,500 supportive housing vouchers and an additional 1,000 housing units for the homeless.

The bill is indeed lacking, but goes further than any other bill to date relating to bring some justice for the people of the Gulf Coast.

However, there are efforts to defeat this bill which would be a boon to the thousands of displaced persons tragically impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

David Vitter—a Republican senator from Louisiana and author of the amendment to the No Child Left Behind Act that requires schools receiving federal funds to permit military recruiters on school grounds and to provide the recruiters with the names, telephone numbers and addresses of all students enrolled—wrote an Oct. 6 opinion piece in the Times Picayune disparaging SB 1668.

Vitter’s opinion piece argued in favor of HUD/HANO’s plan to allow C.J. Peete, St. Bernard, B.W. Cooper and Lafitte units to be demolished and redesigned by private companies with public money. The plan calls for “mixed income housing” developments where the number of units for low-income residents would be greatly reduced and the developments’ primary purpose would be for profit.

A rebuttal of Vitter’s primary arguments for scrapping SB 1668, which serve the desires of developers and the local ruling elite to redesign the city for wealthy whites, has been posted on katrinaaction.org.

The website points to a number of fallacies in Vitter’s opinion piece, chief being that HUD/HANO’s plan accounts for and accommodates the thousands of families who lived in public housing.

The HUD/HANO plan, according to Vitter, “would rebuild the C.J. Peete, St. Bernard, B.W. Cooper and Lafitte developments in a much less dense way with a

mix of residents in terms of income—a third who would traditionally qualify for public housing, a third who need limited rental assistance and a third who would pay full market rate. And the agencies are already supplementing this with other low-income housing, including market-based vouchers.”

In fact, according to public-housing activists, “For some, the ‘mixed-income housing’ concept may sound appealing, but it is being used to cover up the fact that HANO/HUD seek to eliminate 82 percent of the public-housing units that were lived in by residents prior to Hurricane Katrina.”

Katrinaaction.org presents the example of the St. Thomas Housing Development, which was demolished in 2000. It housed 900 families and had 1,600 units total. In its place now stands the “mixed-income housing” development called River Gardens. Over 100 units were set aside for low income, but currently, as revealed in a Counter Punch article written by attorney Bill Quigley, only 60 low-income families live there.

St. Thomas was redeveloped under HUD’s Hope VI program. The contract went to Historic Restoration Inc., a real-estate developer that specializes in turning historic structures into luxury apartments. From the very beginning, not even one-third of River Gardens units were slated for low-income residents.

The destruction of the Desire housing development in favor of “New Desire” is very similar. There were 1,800 units but the new development will have a little more than 400 units set aside as affordable housing.

Vitter is hypocritical in the area of “defending” democratic rights, when he says: “First, the bill would stop the HUD/HANO redevelopment plan dead in its tracks, voiding all of the contracts and agreements presently in place and establishing a moratorium on demolition and redevelopment. Work could only happen once a brand new, bureaucratic consultative process with former and prospective residents was performed and a whole new redevelopment plan was developed and approved.”

His “new” New Orleans, a city for the wealthy and white—where the culture of the oppressed Black masses will be exploited as a draw for the new inhabitants—has no room for the poor or Black people. It is a city that has less than half of the 14,000 public-housing units that were available in 1996.

It is right in line with James Reiss, the wealthy white head of the Regional Transportation Authority, who stated in January 2006, “Those who want to see this city rebuilt want to see it done in a completely different way: demographically, geographically and politically.”

However, one cannot plan a meal from chickens not hatched. The people of New Orleans, especially the oppressed Black people and allies, are determined to fight back. Along with the Jan. 25 and 26 actions and a national poster awareness campaign, a Green Ribbon Campaign has been organized to demand: The Right of Return for the Black majority to New Orleans, Affordable housing for all—Stop the demolition of public housing Now!, Pass Senate Bill 1668—The Gulf Coast Housing Recovery Act of 2007, and Stop the police and government harassment and brutality against peaceful protests.

Go to www.peopleshurricane.org and search for petition for more information on how to support SB 1668.



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# 1,000 march in support of Black man convicted for self-defense

By Leilani Dowell  
New York

On Jan. 5, about a thousand Black, Latin@ and white people marched together in Riverhead, L.I. in protest of another racist attack by the U.S. criminal “justice” system with the Dec. 22 conviction of John White, a Black Long Island man, of second-degree manslaughter. The march was initiated by Rev. Al Sharpton and other civil rights forces. White had shot a white man who was part of a mob threatening his family in the middle of the night.

The mob of intoxicated, young white men arrived at the Whites’ house on Long Island on Aug. 9, 2006, after White’s son, Aaron, was kicked out of a party that the men were present at. It was alleged that Aaron had threatened a young white woman with rape on a posting to the MySpace Web site—an allegation that was later proven false when it was discovered that a friend of Aaron’s was responsible for the posting.

The Black Star News reports: “Aaron upon reaching the safety of his house awoke his father. ... Outside, the lynch mob was busy blocking off the street leading to the White home, while revving the intimidating loud engines of their hot-rod cars and spewing the N-word.” (Dec. 28, 2007)

John White went outside with a handgun to confront the intruders. When one of them, Daniel Cicciaro Jr., lunged at White in an attempt to grab the gun, the gun discharged and Cicciaro was killed.

### Judge colludes with racists

The trial against Mr. White lasted four days, with a jury of ten whites, one Latino and one Black person. (Amsterdam News, Dec. 28, 2007) On Dec. 22, the jury told

the judge that they were deadlocked on the case, with two jurors pressing to acquit.

In a maneuver to force the hand of the two holdouts, Judge Barbara Khan told the jurors to clear their schedules for the next day rather than continuing the trial after the holiday season.

According to defense attorney Eddie Hayes, “The judge made them deliberate for 12 hours on Friday and the Saturday before Christmas, and then told them she might bring them in on Sunday.” (Daily News, Dec. 27, 2007)

She also told the jury that if they didn’t reach a verdict the case would face a jury “that would not be any different from you,” implying that it would be futile for the two jurors to not give in. (Black Star News, Dec. 28, 2007)

## Protest demands: Overturn Lucasville 5 convictions

By Caleb T. Maupin

The Ohio State Penitentiary (OSP) in Youngstown, Ohio, holds 539 people behind its brick walls, multiple barbed wire fences and iron bars. It is within this dungeon that four of the men known as the Lucasville Five are incarcerated: Boman Shakur, Abdullah Hasan, Jason Robb and Namir Abdul Mateen. These men are held in a special section of OSP’s death row, awaiting lethal injection for the crime of participating in a rebellion.

It has been nearly 15 years since the prisoners at Lucasville, in southern Ohio, rebelled and took control of the place in which they were imprisoned. The prisoners engaged in Lucasville rebelled against the brutality, the corruption and the degradation they endured on a daily basis.

In the insurrection that ensued groups like the Aryan Brotherhood, the Black Gangsta Disciples and Sunni Muslims put aside their differences and fought together. They became a “convict race,” as a slogan the prisoner-rebels wrote upon the walls proclaimed.

The prisoners succeeded in negotiating a 21-point agreement that the warden was forced to sign. But afterwards, with a total lack of evidence, the government put five men on death row. They are held in tiny rooms smaller than a parking space for 23 hours a day, and then taken to a cage for the mandated one hour outside of their cells. When they have visitors, they are not permitted even to touch them, and can only

see their loved ones through a screen.

It is in this light that the Cleveland Lucasville Five Defense Committee, the Youngstown Prisoners Forum Group, Loved Ones of Prisoners, and CURE-Ohio have called for a demonstration right in front of the Ohio State Penitentiary in Youngstown, Ohio. The demonstration is called for Jan. 19, the weekend on which the life of Martin Luther King is celebrated.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fought against racism and injustice all his life and was murdered by his racist enemies. This demonstration will be a continuation of his legacy. On Jan. 19, at 12:00, people will gather at the St. Augustine Episcopal Church. They will protest and raise their voices against injustices. Then, they plan to take a car caravan into the prison itself and deliver a letter of petition to the warden, demanding that the prisoners on death row have the ability to touch the ones they love that Ohio denies them during contact visits.

The organizers call on all who can to be there to demand justice. Free the Lucasville Five! Full Contact Rights for Death Row Prisoners! Overturn all the Lucasville Convictions! It is right to rebel, Free the Lucasville Five Now!

For location addresses, van reservations from Cleveland or other information, call (216) 481-6671 or email pfcenter@sbcglobal.net. □

Read an interview with Mumia Abu-Jamal on prisons, capitalism, revolution & solidarity. Order from WWP, 55 W. 17St., 5C, NY, NY 10011 \$4



Reverend Al Sharpton, John White and Sonia White.  
WW PHOTO: RICHARD KOSSALLY

Suffolk County, where the trial was held, is the third most segregated region in the country according to U.S. Census data for the year 2000. Cicciaro’s family was accompanied by skinheads throughout the trial. (Amsterdam News, Dec. 28, 2007)

One hour later, the two jurors caved; White was found guilty. He now faces five to 15 years in prison. White is scheduled to be sentenced on Feb. 21, the 43rd anniversary of the assassination of Black freedom fighter, Malcolm X.

### Jim Crow legacy enforced

White had testified that as a young man, his family had recounted stories about relatives being lynched and the Ku Klux Klan torching his grandfather’s Alabama business in the 1920s. He feared a similar attack was going to happen in the incident at his house and was attempting to defend his family.

The nature of the crime against the

Whites speaks to the legacy of racist scapegoating. Defense attorney Paul Gianelli reminded the jury, “In the South, Black men were hanged because of the accusation they raped a white woman.”

Prosecutor James Chalifoux argued that White should have locked his door and called the police. He raised that the attack on White’s grandfather occurred 30 years before White was born.

Yet why would a Black man in today’s world trust the police to see his side of the story? Defense attorney Marie Michel told the Amsterdam News: “These were 17- to 19-year-olds who were intoxicated, with the knowledge of white privilege. And the police and prosecutors backed up that theory.” (Dec. 28)

Meanwhile, because of death threats against him, 20-year-old Aaron White has been forced to drop out of college, quit his job and move away from home. (Amsterdam News, Dec. 28, 2007) □

## Jim Crow injustice used to silence Black minister

By Cheryl LaBash  
Detroit

The racist frame-up of Benton Harbor, Mich., community activist Rev. Edward Pinkney reached a new low on Dec. 20 when his probation was revoked for a biblical quote used in an article where he decried the injustice still rampant in the Berrien County courts.

Local supporters are asking for immediate and continuous actions demanding an investigation of the court and Rev. Pinkney’s release.

Former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney wrote in an e-mail appeal: “I went to Benton Harbor to support Reverend Pinkney and the people of Benton Harbor in their struggle for self-determination. At this meeting, it was clear that Reverend Pinkney had succeeded in bringing whites and blacks together in this fight for justice. And we know that powerful interests view that as a no-no. Unfortunately, today, the day after our wonderful rally with the residents, Reverend Pinkney was picked up by the police for allegedly violating the terms of his parole to not make ‘inflammatory statements.’”

Rev. Pinkney was arrested at his home on Dec. 14. His computer was seized. He

held a hunger strike until a hearing on Dec. 20. No longer on a hunger strike, he is now held in a 12-foot by 14-foot cell with six other men, sleeping on a mattress on the floor. There is no hot water in the jail. (bhbancoblogspot.com)

Pinkney became the focus of intense state repression after his organization Black Autonomy Network Community Organization (BANCO) spearheaded a successful recall of a city commissioner in February 2005.

The recall of this particular commissioner threatened to block a 500 million dollar, exclusive, upscale development including a Jack Nicklaus golf course, planned by Whirlpool, the multinational appliance manufacturer.

The development would take Benton Harbor’s park on the shore of Lake Michigan and not benefit the overwhelmingly poor African-American population of Benton Harbor at all.

The first attempt to frame Rev. Pinkney for election fraud failed when the jury including two people of color could not come to a verdict. When Pinkney was retried, an all-white jury convicted him based on a witness so incredible that noted defense attorney, Hugh Davis, said, “You couldn’t send a dog to the pound on the testimony.”

# Protests called in Michigan to halt home foreclosures

By Kris Hamel  
Detroit

Activists fighting for a moratorium on home foreclosures in Michigan are stepping up their efforts after an organizing meeting held on Jan. 5. They produced a leaflet to call people out to a public hearing to be held by the Detroit City Council Housing Task Force on Jan. 11. At the hearing activists will press the council to formally apply to Gov. Jennifer Granholm to declare Detroit an economic disaster area, the first step in having her impose a halt on foreclosures in the city.

Progressive attorneys are drafting language that other municipalities will be able to use as well. Foreclosures in the metro Detroit area are up 100 percent from a year ago, with over 72,000 homes now in foreclosure.

United Community Housing Coalition coordinator Ted Philips, who is involved in stopping tax foreclosures in Detroit, told the meeting participants that show-cause hearings are scheduled on Jan. 7-9 for Wayne County tax foreclosures. Activists plan to leaflet the hearings each day.

Community organizer Thelma Curtis spoke about her upcoming eviction from the home that has been owned by her family for over 30 years. “After I was divorced and became responsible for the bills, the mortgage payments rose from \$252 a month to \$550. My daughter bought the home in 2001 and the mortgage payments rose to \$1,100 a month. We found out our house was on a list to be sold, which we did not know about. Now we are in the redemption period which ends on Jan. 19.”

The meeting unanimously agreed to fight to keep Curtis in her home, which she rents from her daughter. An emergency response task force was set up to plan an action to prevent the bailiff from evicting Curtis.

Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI) activist Jerry Goldberg reported on the demonstration, leafleting and petitioning that took place at a mortgage fair on Dec. 13 sponsored by state Attorney General Mike Cox. Thousands of people attended in an effort to find some relief from the foreclosure process.

The response to the demand for a moratorium



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Thelma Curtis, Detroit renter resisting her eviction.

torium was overwhelming, Goldberg stated. “The racist and predatory lenders aren’t going to solve the crisis they’re responsible for. Nothing is abating the situation. All the proposals are like putting a thumb over a bursting dam. The only way to get a state of emergency declared and a moratorium

on foreclosures is by mass pressure. Our task is how to build this movement.”

MECAWI has called for a demonstration at the State Capitol on Tuesday, Jan. 29, at 6:00 p.m. during Gov. Granholm’s annual State of the State Address, to keep up the pressure on the governor to declare a state of emergency and a moratorium on all foreclosures.

A Detroit News article on Jan. 5 as well as on channel 2 Fox News reported on MECAWI’s call. The moratorium campaign was also bolstered by an hour-long community radio and television program hosted by Agnes Hitchcock on Jan. 5. MECAWI organizer Jerry Goldberg was Hitchcock’s guest and reported an overwhelming positive response to the moratorium call.

On Jan. 7 MECAWI organizers will make a presentation on the foreclosure moratorium struggle to a mass meeting of Detroit community organizations.

For bus tickets from Detroit to the Jan. 29 demonstration in Lansing, and for more information on the struggle for a moratorium on foreclosures, call (313) 319-0870 or visit [www.mecawi.org](http://www.mecawi.org). □

# Capitalism’s day of reckoning approaches

By Sam Marcy

*Originally published on Dec. 7, 1995*

When Marxism is discussed in the bourgeois universities, the question often arises: What accounts for the durability of Marxist theory over the years, especially considering the setbacks of the working class in various countries?

Why has Marxism persisted as the doctrine of the working-class struggle, despite persecution in almost every land?

Some seek mystical answers. Others may go so far as to look upon Marxism as an eternal truth.

If Marxism were a religious doctrine, its persistence would be easily explained as the work of divine inspiration. But that would be contrary to everything Marxism teaches—the materialist interpretation of history above all.

Still, the question arises again and again. Why has Marxism endured in so many countries, despite the signal defeats in the USSR and Eastern Europe?

We must seek the answer in material conditions.

It has persisted because the working class needs a doctrine in order to combat its class enemies, particularly the bourgeoisie. Nowhere and at no time has the working class defeated the bourgeoisie without recourse to the theory of revolutionary Marxism.

History teaches that just to open up a serious struggle against the bourgeoisie, it is necessary to have a Marxist understanding of the nature of the class struggle.

## Capitalism emerged from feudalism

At this time capitalism is in high gear. Capitalist production is constantly expanding all over the world, seemingly without limits. Feudalism having been destroyed, first in Europe and later in the rest of the world, the gates to capitalist development are wide open almost everywhere.

The development of capitalism differs widely from feudalism. Feudalism, however one interprets its origins or development, was basically a stationary system. Only when embryonic capitalism broke



*Intro:* Sam Marcy, the founder of Workers World Party, died on Feb. 1, 1998. We'll be rerunning a selection of his past articles to familiarize

our readers with his analyses, and what he taught about applying the basics of Marxism and historical materialism to the challenges facing the working class and oppressed today. For more of his writings, see [www.workers.org/marcy](http://www.workers.org/marcy).

away from feudal restrictions and began to expand outward did it became a serious factor in Europe.

The transition period from feudalism to capitalism was not an automatic economic process, by any means. It was accompanied by revolutionary struggles that arose as a result of capitalism’s need to expand.

Feudalism’s further existence in a stationary situation led to stagnation and the decay of the limited productive forces developed up to that time. Only a break from the confines of the feudal system opened up the road to capitalist development.

The feudal ruling classes were inherently opposed to expansion. They concerned themselves mainly with reproducing what they already had. Bourgeois historians forget to mention that all this was possible so long as the peasantry produced all the goods and services for a decadent landlord class.

Once the ruling classes of Europe began to reach out beyond their static societies, they opened the gateway to revolutionary change.

Columbus’s voyage in search of a new world, for example, was not just an individual entrepreneurial effort. It was sponsored by Queen Isabella of Spain. In the long run, it tremendously spurred the growth of the bourgeoisie in Europe.

## Momentous era approaches

The question that arises in the contemporary period is whether the further development of capitalism can be accomplished in a “peaceful” way, without stepping on

the rights of millions of people. The recent history of capitalism—indeed the whole 20th century—speaks against it.

After the tremendous conflagration of World War II, it was thought in some circles that the competition among the so-called great powers would end in a peaceful, general agreement sanctified by such organizations as the United Nations. But nothing of the sort is happening. The voracious appetite of the U.S. monopolies gives no ground for belief in any of this.

The same could be said of the other imperialist powers. They have not grown less voracious but are held at bay everywhere on the globe by the monstrous growth of U.S. militarism.

Yet the whole edifice of capitalism is marked by instability. It cannot avoid a capitalist economic downturn at some point.

Even among capitalist economists, there is really none who predicts an end to the severe economic crises caused by capitalist overproduction.

The cyclically occurring crises of earlier

years have been held at bay by stupendous military contracts during peacetime, allowing the capitalist economy to retain a precarious stability. Yet this cannot go on for long.

The reckoning may be delayed, but it is sure to come.

What needs to be considered by the militant, more class-conscious, more wide-awake elements in the working-class movement? It is how to prepare for the coming period.

The very success of capitalism in vastly expanding the means of production through ruthlessly restructuring will disrupt the present economic patterns and lay bare the most important contradiction of capitalism. That contradiction is between the socialized character of the production process and the individual—really corporate—ownership of the basic means of production.

A momentous era is fast approaching. It will not only influence U.S. history but will have far-reaching effects throughout the world. □

# Foreclosure storm hits major cities

*Continued from page 1*

for millions of families, especially in the Black communities, it is a “perfect storm” that has engulfed their lives and turned them upside down.

In Detroit, which has been virtually abandoned by the auto companies its workers made rich and which has the sad distinction of leading the country in foreclosures, activists are demanding the governor declare a moratorium that would prevent the banks and mortgage companies from seizing people’s homes.

In Cleveland, where the mostly Black inner city was the first to lose homes to the auctioneer’s hammer, the crisis has now spread to the largely white suburbs where auto workers protected by union contracts had lived a fairly comfortable existence. Many have now been laid off.

In Baltimore, a majority Black city, the racist, predatory lending practices of Wells

Fargo Bank are the subject of a lawsuit. The city charges that when Black people applied to the bank for mortgages, two thirds were told they qualified only for the more expensive “subprime” mortgages. But only 15 percent of the bank’s white customers in the same area were channeled into subprime loans, says the city’s lawsuit. The subprime rate is at least 3 points higher than the prime rate and results in much larger monthly payments.

The suit says that Baltimore is in a foreclosure crisis; notices of default, foreclosure sales and lenders’ purchases of foreclosed properties rose more than five times between the first and second quarters of 2007.

The heartache of losing one’s home is devastating and can have a long-lasting effect on physical, mental and financial health. Yet much more attention is being

*Continued on page 5*

# Filipino nurses targeted for exposing abuses

By Bernadette Ellorin  
New York

The criminally charged nurses within the Sentosa 27 stood firm and united during their last criminal court appearance Dec. 17 at a state supreme courthouse in Suffolk County on Long Island, N.Y., when the assistant district attorney advised that they take on separate legal counsels.

The Avalon 10 and their lawyer, Felix Vinluan, have been leading a popular campaign to appeal to New York Gov. Elliot Spitzer to appoint a special prosecutor independent of the Suffolk County district attorney's office on Long Island.

The Sentosa 27 nurses, with the assistance of the National Alliance for Filipino Concerns or NAFCON, have been waging a justice campaign since 2006, in a clear case of human trafficking, illegal recruiting and indentured servitude at the hands of SentosaCare LLC. Sentosa is a major health-care management agency managing over 12 nursing homes in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Sentosa is owned and managed by Bent Philipson, a major political contributor to Sen. Charles Schumer as well as former Philippine Executive Secretary Mike Defensor. The nurses claim political interference on Sentosa's part has been a major obstruction to justice in their campaign thus far, and has enabled the fraudulent Sentosa Recruitment Agency in Manila to continue to operate.

"We are very concerned that anyone affiliated with District Attorney Thomas Spota will not afford us a fair and objective trial," said Vinluan. "This has been an uphill battle wherein all signs point to the reality that the Sentosa camp is working in collusion with Sen. Charles Schumer and other local government officials. These political ties yield power and influence to the multi-million-dollar Sentosa camp and disenfranchise us of our rights as immigrants."

The nurses say that a Spota trial would establish a strong anti-immigrant and pro-Sentosa bias was further substantiated by the fact that before the indictment, Spota had a series of private meetings with the principals of Avalon Gardens, the

Riverhead nursing home owned and managed by SentosaCare LLC.

Despite standing firm that all nurses were satisfied being represented by one legal counsel for the course of their criminal trial, attorney James Druker, it was evident that Judge Robert Doyle felt compelled to advise them to seek more than one attorney for the case.

"These are divide-and-rule tactics," stated Rico Foz, executive vice president of the NAFCON. "It is not beyond the Sentosa camp and the Suffolk district attorney to seek to weaken the unity of the Avalon 10 by dividing them up by legal counsels and giving them uneven advise. We admire the example of the nurses' unity at this critical time."

Vinluan had advised that the nurses had the right to resign after working for more than a year under violated employment contracts and after suffering intolerable work place abuse. SentosaCare LLC owner Bent Philipson retaliated by filing criminal charges against the 10 nurses for patient endangerment, while Vinluan was charged with tortuous interference.

"This is not just about the rights of immigrant nurses, but the rights of lawyers to offer their clients sound legal advice are also being called to question," Vinluan defended.

The Avalon 10 maintain that none of their patients faced endangerment and that they fully resigned only after completing their shifts and making sure the incoming nurses were already in. Since then, the Sentosa 27, along with NAFCON, have launched an international campaign for justice and to shut down the fraudulent and illegal operations of SentosaCare LLC and the Sentosa Recruitment Agency in Manila.

The nurses and Vinluan maintain that the immediate battlefield at this point, before the Jan. 28 start date of the criminal trial, is to convince Spitzer to appoint a special prosecutor before then. A letter-writing campaign to Spitzer has already been launched by NAFCON, the New York Nurses Association, the American Nurses Association, the Philippine Nurses Association, Region 1 of the National Federation of Filipino-American

Associations, as well as the California Nurses Association.

Community members are encouraged to also send letters to Spitzer, by faxing at 518-474-1513, or email at [www.ny.gov](mailto:www.ny.gov).

"Justice will be challenged if Sentosa has already bought off the Suffolk County Court System before the criminal trial even starts," Foz emphasized.



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## Activists meet to plan unified Jan. 21st contingent

Forty people gathered on Jan. 7 at Brother Jeff's Cultural Center and Cafe in the heart of the historic Black community of Five Points on a cold snowy evening under the slogan:

"Commemorate our leaders; Fight Racism from the Mexican Border, to New Orleans, to Palestine and to Iraq."

Those gathered listened to speakers from the Black community; Dahlia Wasfi, an Iraqi anti-war organizer; an Indigenous community speaker; a Mexican National Liberation Movement member; a union organizer of Salvadoran descent; and a member of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

This broad coalition of forces heeded the call for an anti-racist day of action on

Jan. 21, the upcoming holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. These forces have been organizing on the basis of unity of the oppressed since 2007 when an alternative political rally was called to coincide with the city of Denver's benign parade on the King holiday which is usually led by a white mayor, a white governor and only allows signs designed by State Farm Insurance.

The Jan. 7 gathering of people committed to building a strong contingent to march against racism and war on Jan. 21 will continue organizing right up to and including against the Democratic National Convention in Denver this coming August.

—Workers World Denver bureau

Continued from page 4

paid in the corporate media to the problems of Wall Street than of Main Street.

### Markets decline and Fed is split

On Jan. 8, the stock and bond markets tumbled on rumors that Countrywide Financial, the biggest mortgage lender in the country, might declare bankruptcy. The Wall Street Journal's Marketbeat blog, in a piece called "Countrywide shares tanking," quoted market strategist Joe Kinahan as saying that the volatility of the company's stock was "through the roof—it's almost a panic situation."

The Dow Jones Industrial Average of stock prices had hit a record high above 14,000 in October. A steady decline has been going on since then, and by the second week in January the DJIA had fallen below 12,600—a loss of about 10 percent. While the market is always fluctuating, this kind of sustained decline is more than a "correction" caused by inflated stock prices—like a heart that is fibrillating, it points to weaknesses in the organism itself, especially when accompanied by other very significant economic problems.

Before last year, new housing construction had driven much of the eco-

nomic growth in this country. New housing starts have now declined as existing foreclosed homes are put on the market at fire-sale prices. The ripple effect is felt in lumber, roofing and siding materials, furnaces and plumbing, appliances, home furnishings—every industry associated with home construction.

As companies reduce production, laying off workers and/or cutting their hours, the crisis spreads into other markets and services. States and municipalities like Baltimore are particularly worried right now that their tax base will shrink at a time when social problems and the need for palliative services are on the rise.

Over the last two decades, several market crises seemed to threaten a general recession. When that happened, the federal government stepped in through the Federal Reserve system, this country's central bank, and lowered interest rates to stimulate the economy. But this time the bank is in a deep dilemma.

According to news reports, the Fed's directors are split over what to do. Charles Plosser, head of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia—where a lot of "old money" resides—in a speech to the Gladwyne, Pa., Chamber of Commerce worried that the "risks of higher inflation" might out-

weigh the risks of "even weaker economic growth." In other words, the economy faces the dreaded "stagflation," when government intervention to ease credit could unleash a serious inflationary spiral. (Wall Street Journal, Jan. 8)

Not all areas of the economy have turned down, however. The military-related stocks in the SPADE Defense Index increased in value by over 22 percent last year.

Besides pumping in credit, or liquidity, to stave off a capitalist economic crisis, the other major government intervention intended to stimulate the economy—and pump enormous wealth into a handful of corporations well-connected to the military brass—has been the growing "defense" budget. Military spending, however, creates fewer and fewer jobs as the armed forces and their weaponry become more high-tech.

And what was originally a stimulant can become a depressant as the capitalist government goes ever deeper in debt to pay for future, present and past wars—especially if these wars, which are meant to expand the territory available for imperialist super-exploitation, end in failure, as happened in Vietnam and is doing so again in Iraq and Afghanistan.

That federal debt now exceeds \$9 tril-

lion—or \$30,000 for every woman, man and child in this country. You're paying the interest on that debt right now, even if you're not aware of it. It's in every bill you pay, every tax taken from your paycheck, every service you should be getting from the government but aren't.

For now, the hope of many people to find a way out of this horrible mess seems to be centered on the elections. Whoever is the next president, however, the capitalist economy will respond to its own inner dynamic, which seems to be driving it toward a significant recession.

If that happens, the rich ruling class will do as always and put profits before people, which means more layoffs in both the private and the public sector as the budget crisis deepens. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is already calling for automatic budget cuts when the state's revenues fall—which would mean significant layoffs of state workers.

The time-tested recipe from earlier periods of crisis and intense class struggle shows that the only way for the working class to defend its interests is through independent, militant action that asserts that the workers' right to their jobs and a decent standard of living must take precedence over the profits of the rich. □

## Plummer vs. Quinn hearing

# At stake is right to self-determination

By Amadi Ajamu  
New York

Jan. 3—On this frigid January morning, hundreds trekked to the U.S. Southern District Federal Court in downtown New York City to witness the civil case of Viola Plummer vs. NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn. They soon filled the courtroom to capacity. The overflow crowd watched via satellite from another room, and more filled the halls. Clearly the Sonny Carson street name saga continues to resonate among Black and progressive New Yorkers.

Ms. Quinn’s vast array of detractors stood united in opposition to her positions on legislation affecting grassroots, working-class Black people. Leading activists spoke out at a press conference in front of the courthouse. Among them, Nellie Bailey of the Harlem Tenants Association addressed Quinn’s support of Columbia University’s takeover of Harlem; and Imani Henry, a leader in the Black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community cited Quinn’s support of police harassment and deafening silence on hate crimes against Black LGBT youth.

“This case centers on a fundamental issue for Black people all around this country,” explained supporter Kamau Brown. “Street name changes, gentrification, nooses, police terrorism, mob attacks, it all adds up to plain old racism. It’s systemic. It’s in City Hall, the police department, the Board of Education, health care. People don’t have a choice but to fight, every step of the way.”

Ms. Plummer, chief of staff to City Councilman Charles Barron, is suing Speaker Quinn for \$1 million for summary termination. Quinn’s unprecedented action stemmed from a raucous City Council meeting where the issue of the Carson street name change was debated. Her attorneys on the NYC Corporation Counsel filed a motion to dismiss the case.

Many news outlets paint a hyped picture of “assassination” talk against Councilman Leroy Comrie in this case. While it was raised to buttress Quinn’s defense, the defendant’s principal issue is Ms. Plummer’s “disruptive” behavior in the Council chamber during the Sonny Carson street debate. Ms. Plummer allegedly loudly called Ms. Quinn and

Councilman Michael Nelson, “liar” during their testimony about Mr. Carson, thereby disrupting the meeting and council operations, although the vote and meeting continued until adjourned. The Corporation Counsel argued, “Disruptive speech is not protected by the First Amendment.”

Attorneys Roger Wareham and Noah Kinigstein represented the plaintiff, Ms. Plummer; and Attorneys James Lemonedes and Paul Marks represented the defendant, Ms. Quinn. Both sides argued the motion on the grounds of the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, equal protection, and due process. Judge William H. Pauley III, a President Clinton appointee, presided.

Judge Pauley brusquely demanded facts on “how the meeting and council operations were disrupted.” Attorney Lemonedes’ inability to substantiate crucial arguments was awkward. A particular point of contention focused on his claim of Ms. Plummer’s history of “disruptive” behavior in council meetings. The judge questioned his attempt to “conflate” an unrelated incident in his argument.

Lemonedes cited a public safety meeting, he could not recall the date, where Ms. Plummer “gaspd and said ‘wow,’ thereby disrupting the meeting and council operations.” Further questioning revealed the meeting took place over five months before the Carson vote. Mr. Lemonedes gave no explanation for the delayed report of the incident by Councilman Peter Vallone Jr. Nor could he explain how the meeting was “disrupted.” He only stated, “The incident contributed to Ms. Quinn’s state of mind in evaluating Ms. Plummer’s behavior.”

Ms. Plummer later explained the incident to supporters. The public safety meeting was held in the wake of the racially controversial police killing of Sean Bell. “Police Commissioner Kelly was in the meeting and Councilwoman Leticia

James attempted to criticize the police department. Kelly stopped her in her tracks by abruptly saying, ‘That’s not what you said behind closed doors.’ That’s when I gasped and said ‘wow.’ Vallone looked at me but he did not say anything.”

“Your Honor, first we need to put all of this in context,” Plummer’s attorney Roger Wareham declared. “This is a question of racism and the Constitution. The racist and unprecedented actions taken by the Speaker, against the Bedford Stuyvesant community in their attempt to change Gates Avenue to Sonny Abubadika Carson Street, led to all of this. After community leaders utilized all legal means to rename the street, the Speaker inserted herself into the process, demanding Carson’s name be removed. She declared him ‘too divisive.’ Ironically, Quinn herself previously renamed a street in midtown after the original black-faced minstrel, Al Jolson.”

“Sonny Carson was a convenient target, her ‘race card’ to garner political support on the ‘right’ in her mayoral bid. Her racist motivation continued with her unilateral termination of Ms. Plummer. There are guidelines laid out in the NYC Charter, the Administrative Code, and the Council Ethics and Standards Committee, which deal with disciplinary issues. Ms. Plummer was denied all of these,” Wareham continued.

“The Speaker has no authority here. Ms. Plummer has been denied due process to a disciplinary hearing in the council. No one, not Councilman Comrie, not Councilman Nelson, not even the Speaker herself, ever made any official complaint against Ms. Plummer.”

Wareham explained that Ms. Plummer is an employee of Councilman Barron. “It is unprecedented that a Speaker has dared to dictate who an elected official can have on his staff. The Speaker has jurisdiction over the Council central staff only.”

On the issue of Councilman Comrie, Wareham said, “My client was not acting in any official capacity. She is an independent veteran community leader in this city and was speaking to her constituents outside City Hall on the plaza. She is protected by the First Amendment to state her personal views.”

At the last minute Attorney Lemonedes scrambled to insert the issue of “qualified immunity,” legislation which protects government officials in civil law suits.

Judge Pauley’s ruling on the motion is expected in the coming weeks.

*Amadi Ajamu is an organizer with the Brooklyn-based December 12<sup>th</sup> Movement.*

## Supporters demand justice for Black leader

Supporters of Viola Plummer, a revolutionary leader of the Brooklyn-based December 12th Movement, and New York City Councilperson Charles Barron huddled together at a press conference in front of the U.S. District Court on Jan. 3. A piercing wind and single digit temperatures didn’t cool the anger of speakers who related illegal actions of NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn and the NYC Corporation Counsel.

Speaking in English and in Spanish, activists representing many oppressed communities in the city, including those struggling for LGBT and immigrant rights, denounced Quinn’s gross racism.

Plummer is suing Speaker Quinn in federal court for illegally firing her as Barron’s chief of staff. Quinn took this racist action after using her position as City Council Speaker to block popular demands to change a Brooklyn street name to Sonny Abubadika Carson Avenue last summer.

Plummer was hired by Councilperson Barron. She filed the court suit because Quinn overstepped her legal authority, violating both Barron and Plummer’s right to self-determination. See related article on the Jan. 3 court hearing.

—Lal Roohk



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City Council member Charles Barron and Viola Plummer.

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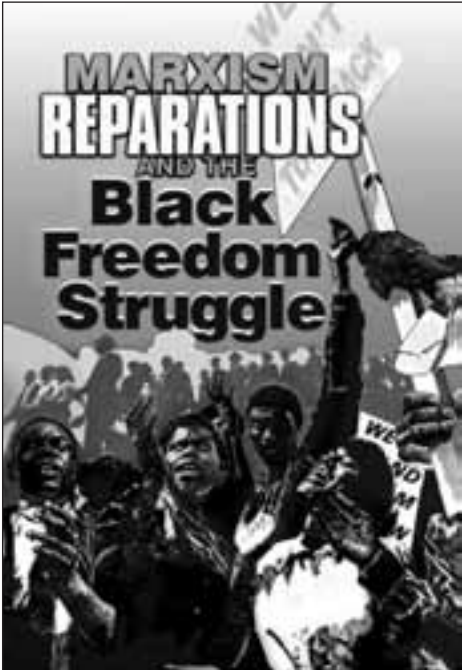
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GRAPHIC ON THE COVER BY SAHU BARRON

# MLK March to show solidarity with immigrants, Black people

By Tyneisha Bowens  
New York

On Jan. 3 a coalition of anti-racist organizations and activists in New York City welcomed in the new year with a planning meeting for the Martin Luther King Jr. March Against Racism that took place at the Solidarity Center.

The MLK March Against Racism Coalition was formed this past Dec. 12 at an anti-racist meeting hosted by N.Y. FIST (Fight Imperialism—Stand Together) youth group and the International Action Center. This coalition was formed as an answer to the nationwide increase in racism.

January 21 will be nationally recognized as Martin Luther King Day, a progressive holiday fought for by Black people and anti-racist allies to honor Dr. King’s commitment to social justice.

Over the years, this day has been co-opted and commercialized by the ruling class. To the MLK March Against Racism Coalition the recent racist attacks on immigrants, Black youth, LGBT people of color and women clarified the need for people of color and anti-racist allies to reclaim Martin Luther King Day as a day of building unity and solidarity by taking to the streets.

A march in New York City, as well as other events around the country, will take place on Jan. 21. This march against racism will connect the attacks on all people of color including immigrants, Black folks, LGBT folks and women and staunchly criticize corporate-funded racists like Lou Dobbs of CNN and radio host Don Imus of the infamously racist network ABC.

Lou Dobbs has been spreading his racist anti-immigrant sentiment for years now through the supposedly liberal CNN. On his program he has falsely blamed immigrants for increased crime and disease in this country and has vocalized his support for murderous bigots like the Minutemen.

As a scapegoat for the economic crisis and victim of demonization campaigns the immigrant community has had to face racist legislation, deportations, physical assaults and detentions.

Last April Don Imus made racist and sexist remarks toward the Rutgers University women’s basketball team, including his reference to them as “nappy-headed hos.” Imus’ show was dropped after mass protest, but after only 9 months off the air Imus has been hired by ABC.

ABC has had a history of racist programming including the recent “Desperate Housewives” TV episode that portrayed Filipino health care workers as inferior to U.S. health care workers.

The Filipino community and their allies were outraged at such white supremacist implications. ABC offered

employment opportunities to Filipino people but has yet to officially apologize for this particular episode.

“We don’t want jobs from them, we want an apology,” said Bernadette Ellorin of BAYAN-USA during the Jan. 3rd coalition meeting.

For these reasons and more, the MLK March Against Racism will target CNN and ABC in New York where both Dobbs and Imus broadcast from.

The march will also bring attention to the housing struggle that is taking place from Harlem to New Orleans. Tenants, “homeowners” and community members are combating racist gentrification, foreclosures and demolitions.

As exemplified in New Orleans, the right to public housing is under attack and those who defend this right are being brutally silenced. To acknowledge the racism of these attacks on housing and to show

solidarity with those facing evictions, demolitions, and foreclosures the coalition is planning for the Jan. 21 march to stop at a local housing development.

For more information about the MLK March Against Racism, visit [www.troopsoutnow.org](http://www.troopsoutnow.org) to endorse, volunteer, download leaflets and posters or call the Solidarity Center at 212-633-6646.

*The writer is a leading organizer of FIST.*

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# Kenyan explosion fueled by poverty, flawed election

By G. Dunkel

After the Electoral Commission of Kenya certified Mwai Kibaki on Dec. 31 as victor over Rail Odinga in the Dec. 27 presidential election, giving Kibaki 4.6 million votes to 4.4 million votes for Odinga, the opposition supporters, including many of the poorest Kenyans, rose up in protests that were in turn repressed with police bullets. According to accounts in the Kenyan and Ugandan press, as well as in the imperialist-controlled media, by Jan. 6 at least 1,000 people all over Kenya from the Coast to the Rift Valley had died in the battles. Some 250,000 Kenyans have been forced to leave their homes.

Kenya is among the 20 poorest countries in the world, with a per capita income of \$360 and a high degree of income inequality. Many of Odinga’s supporters were from the very poor, and not all the fighting has taken place along ethnic lines. Nevertheless, much of the big-

business media in the United States try to portray this outburst in Kenya solely as the result of ethnic tension and ethnic disappointment over what is seen as a manipulated election result.

But the corporate media omit the historical background and the role the imperialist world plays in the internal conflicts in the former colonies. They hide the responsibility of the colonial policy devised by the British and reinforced by Washington to divide and conquer, pitting peoples against peoples, nationalities against nationalities, and setting up countries, not only in Africa but also in Asia and the Middle East, for internal conflict in order to strengthen the hand of imperialism. As they were being driven out of their colonial holdings in South Asia, the British divided the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. They split Kuwait from Iraq to hold onto its oil. They drew arbitrary borders in Afghanistan and Sudan. They made these moves to sow the

seeds of future conflict that they could use to promote their own interests.

In Kenya, the British consciously followed a policy of divide-and-rule, favoring some of the 40 ethnic groups in the country over the others. Kibaki is from the Kikuyu ethnic group, which contains about 22 percent of the Kenyan population. The British, the former colonial power in Kenya, focused their exploitation and oppression and land grabbing on this ethnic group, which led to the Mau Mau rebellion from 1952 to 1959. Over 10,000 people were killed during this period and the British forced nearly 300,000 into resettlement camps.

Odinga belongs to the Luo people, which is about 13 percent of the Kenyans. His father, Oginga Odinga, was one of the Luo leaders of the struggle against British imperialism and was vice-president in the first government after independence, serving with President Jomo Kenyatta.

Kenyatta, who was a Kikuyu and a leader of the Mau Mau, spent most of the rebellion in prison.

Raila Odinga, educated in the socialist German Democratic Republic but now a wealthy business owner, was himself part of the Kibaki government from 2002 to 2005.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Dr. Jendayi Frazer arrived in Nairobi Jan. 4. She has had a series of meetings with President Mwai Kibaki, who Washington has treated as an ally up to now, and separately with Raila Odinga. As of Jan. 7 Dr. Frazer was still in Nairobi, calling the elections flawed, criticizing both the regime and the opposition, and thus not publicly taking sides.

Odinga’s party has called off nationwide demonstrations called for Jan. 8, citing the “threats of violence.” But no agreement on power sharing or new elections has been announced. It appears that

*Continued on page 9*

## Occupation unraveling

# Iraqi soldier kills two U.S. troops

By David Hoskins

The strength of the Iraqi resistance and the level of anti-U.S. anger within the Iraqi army asserted itself in December when at least one Iraqi soldier purposefully shot and killed two U.S. soldiers during a joint patrol in the city of Mosul.

Resistance fighters stationed inside nearby buildings had fired on the patrol as soldiers attempted to set up combat outposts. The ambush appeared to be a well planned and coordinated attack and may have involved the cooperation of Iraqi soldiers on duty. An Iraqi soldier in the puppet army shot dead two U.S. soldiers who were beating a pregnant Iraqi woman.

Iraqi army commanders Brig. Gen. Mutaab Habib al-Khazraji and Brig. Gen. Noor al-Din Hussein have claimed that the shooting was deliberate and the Iraqi soldier has ties to the resistance. A second Iraqi soldier is also being held in the incident. The involvement of at least two

soldiers suggests that the degree of sympathy and collaboration with the resistance in Iraq’s army may be more widespread than the Pentagon has previously acknowledged.

If the official story coming out of Iraq regarding the soldier’s ties to the insurgency is not true, U.S. and Iraqi armed forces could be attempting to cover up what they consider an even more alarming detail. It would mean that the length and severity of the occupation has worn the patience of average Iraqis to such an extent that it has spread throughout Iraq’s armed forces and U.S. soldiers may at times find themselves battling their counterparts in the Iraqi military.

The December shootings mark the first time since the occupying forces invaded in 2003 that the U.S. media has reported that a soldier in Iraq’s current army has intentionally killed U.S. service members. According to the Arab Times, a similar incident occurred in 2004 when Iraqi

civil defense officers killed two U.S. soldiers on patrol with them. The Iraqi Civil Defense Corps was a precursor to today’s Iraqi army.

Bush ordered an additional 21,500 troops into combat at the beginning of 2006 in an attempt to establish a level of corporate-defined stability in Iraq. The December incident underlines the failure of this “surge” in U.S. forces to provide the necessary conditions for continued occupation and maximum exploitation of the Iraqi people’s oil resources.

Just as importantly, the killing of U.S. soldiers by members of the Iraqi puppet government’s army illustrates the fact that the popular resistance in Iraq cannot be defeated regardless of U.S. technical superiority in arms or the number of troops it sends into Iraq.

The U.S. military intentionally recruits among the nationally oppressed and the poorest sections of the working class at home to provide fodder for the ruling

class’ war games abroad.

### Put the blame where it belongs

While it is understandable if rank-and-file U.S. soldiers mourn the deaths of their fellow soldiers shot in December, it is important to put the blame where it belongs. The U.S. government sent soldiers into Iraq based on a lie, and ordered them to occupy and bomb its people into submission.

When a U.S. soldier dies in Iraq it is not the fault of Iraqi freedom fighters inside or outside of Iraq’s armed forces. The blame for those deaths belongs squarely at the feet of the U.S. government’s civilian and military leadership which sent these young men and women off to die in an imperialist war of conquest.

The task of the anti-war movement inside the U.S. is to help U.S. soldiers to join the struggle against the war and to understand the just struggle of the Iraqi

*Continued on page 9*

# New probe aims to cover up CIA tortures

By John Catalinotto

In an attempt to limit political damage and protect the highest officials, the new U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey has ordered a special investigation of the decision in 2005 to destroy tapes of CIA interrogations made in 2002 of two alleged high-level Al-Qaeda officials. The investigation is limited to how the decision was made and who made it. It is not supposed to probe the content of the tapes, which are said to show brutal interrogations using torture.

Washington often claims to be the champion of “human rights” and uses an alleged lack of human rights to attack or impose sanctions on those it considers its enemies. Since the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, however, Washington and especially the CIA have become identified with torture of prisoners, from Baghram in Afghanistan, to Abu Ghraib in Iraq, to Guantánamo on the U.S.-occupied eastern tip of Cuba.

Since torture is illegal within the U.S.—at least on paper if not in practice—the CIA

has even outsourced interrogations to client states, a process called “rendition.”

The tapes destroyed involve hundreds of hours of interrogation of Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. Both were captured in 2002 and are now being held at Guantánamo Bay among the 275 remaining prisoners of the 800 who had been held there since 2001. Zubaydah was captured in a fire-fight in Pakistan in March of 2002 and interrogated then at a CIA safe house in Thailand. Al-Nashiri was captured in the United Arab Emirates.

Zubaydah confessed to being a high-ranking al-Qaeda official. Al-Nashiri said he planned the 2000 attack against the USS Cole in Yemeni waters, which blew a hole in the side of the guided-missile destroyer and killed 17 sailors. The U.S. authorities classified both as “enemy combatants.”

Since U.S. interrogators admittedly used extreme sensory and sleep deprivation, along with waterboarding—and who knows what else—to get these confessions, it is possible that in 2002 the two

prisoners told their interrogators anything they believed might stop the punishment. Both have since challenged the confessions, saying they were obtained under torture.

By the end of 2002, the CIA says it stopped taping interrogations. For the next three years, CIA legal counsels, CIA heads George Tenet and Porter Goss, discussed among themselves and with White House counsel whether or not the CIA could get away with destroying the tapes. Jane Harman of California, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, wrote a letter advising the CIA not to destroy the tapes.

### Bush gang promotes torture methods

Despite legal advice that destroying the tapes might interfere with future investigations, the CIA kept pushing to destroy the tapes. The Bush administration, whose Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez had provided a legal defense of brutal interrogation techniques (while refusing to call them torture), at the very

least failed to order the CIA to desist from destroying the tapes.

In June 2005, U.S. District Judge Henry H. Kennedy ordered the Bush administration to safeguard “all evidence and information regarding the torture, mistreatment and abuse of detainees now at the United States Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay,” which would include the above tapes. Nevertheless, in November 2005, the CIA destroyed the tapes, under orders from Jose Rodriguez, who headed the National Clandestine Service.

The CIA claimed it destroyed the tapes to protect the safety of the interrogating officers from retaliation from al-Qaeda. Other observers said it was also to protect these officials’ careers.

But most suspect the CIA destroyed the tapes with the blessing of the White House because public exposure of the torture would make Washington even more hated than the Abu Ghraib prison scandal did.

The New York Times wrote: “Interrogations of Abu Zubaydah had gotten rougher, with each new tactic

*Continued on page 9*

# ALERT: U.S. war provocation against Iran

By Sara Flounders

the African Union will also be sending President John Kufuor as a mediator.

Washington is trying to recolonize East Africa under the guise of the so-call “war against terror.” Since February 1980 it has had an agreement with Kenya for the use of local military facilities, such as the port of Mombasa and airfields at Embakasi and Nanyuki. The airbases were used very recently when U.S. special forces intervened along with Ethiopia to drive out the Islamic Courts government in Somalia. London and now Washington’s use of a client regime in Kenya to support its overall intervention in East Africa can do nothing but harm the people of Kenya, whatever nationality or ethnic group they belong to.

Whatever steps the Kenyans take to resolve the current crisis, it will be important for anti-imperialists worldwide to demand that the U.S. and Britain keep their hands off Kenya and East Africa. □

resistance. In the process these soldiers can assert their humanity and dignity by refusing to let themselves continue to be pawns for the U.S. military command.

During the U.S. occupation of Vietnam, when there was a strong and active anti-imperialist movement among civilians inside the U.S., U.S. troops in Vietnam expressed their resistance in many ways. Troops deserted while on leave, units refused to go on patrols and in hundreds of cases troops “fragged” or used fragmentation grenades to kill commissioned and non-commissioned officers who were racist or who were ordering them to patrol.

The existence of anti-occupation forces even among the so-called Iraqi allies—that is, the puppet army—will certainly add to the growing demoralization of U.S. troops forced to remain in Iraq. Whatever opportunities and methods for resistance become available to U.S. troops are legitimate in a situation where they have been sent to oppress a sovereign nation with no justification. □

approved by cable from headquarters. [U.S.] American officials have said that Abu Zubaydah was the first al Qaeda prisoner to be waterboarded, a procedure during which water is poured over the prisoner’s mouth and nose to create a feeling of drowning. Officials said they felt they could not risk a public leak of a videotape showing [U.S.] Americans giving such harsh treatment to bound prisoners.” (Dec. 30)

Mukasey, while being questioned by Congress before his appointment as attorney general, refused to say if he believed that waterboarding was torture. The tapes would leave no doubt that it is.

While the Justice Department is attempting to limit the investigation, a popular revulsion against the Bush administration makes it possible that the probe will go further than expected. Already, progressive organizations of attorneys like the Center for Constitutional Rights—which has taken the lead in organizing legal defense of the prisoners in Guantánamo and elsewhere—have raised protests against the Bush gang’s attack on constitutional rights and have called on Congress to act. The last word on the CIA tapes is yet to be spoken. □

What is an armada of U.S. warships doing off the coast of Iran?

The Pentagon has initiated an extremely dangerous war provocation just off Iran’s coast, in the Strait of Hormuz.

The U.S. Navy has gathered nuclear-armed aircraft carriers, guided-missile destroyers, frigates, cruisers and submarines thousands of miles from the U.S. off the coast of Iran.

Isn’t this massive mobilization of deadly, nuclear-armed equipment a major provocation?

On Jan. 6, the U.S. claims a “confrontation” took place between three massive guided-missile U.S. attack vessels and five small, open Iranian speedboats at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. Iranian media on Jan. 9 denied the U.S. claims, saying Washington fabricated a video showing the skirmish.

At its narrowest point, the Strait of Hormuz is only 34 miles across. However, there is only a 2-mile-wide navigable channel for inbound and outbound tanker traffic, as well as a 2-mile-wide buffer zone. Roughly 40 percent of all globally traded oil supply flows on ships through this narrow chokepoint of water between the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.

It is essential to take note of when this dangerous “incident” took place. It was on the eve of President George W. Bush’s trip to the region. Bush is expected to spend eight days visiting Kuwait, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Saudi Arabia. The purpose of his trip is to convince these corrupt, feudal regimes, which are dependent U.S.-client states, that Iran represents a dangerous threat.

Isn’t this threatening trip to the countries surrounding Iran a provocative act?

While the Iranian government has attempted to downplay the incident, Washington has gone out of its way to further threaten Iran. The corporate media has, with one voice, uncritically reported the U.S. charges that what happened was an Iranian “provocation.”

President Bush claimed Iran committed “a provocative act and a dangerous situation.” Vice Adm. Kevin Cosgriff attacked Iran as “unnecessarily provocative.” Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice described the move as “provocative and dangerous.” Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesperson, charged the Iranians with acting in a “reckless and dangerous manner.”

## U.S. warships a constant threat

None of the corporate media has even once asked what this deadly array of U.S. warships is doing in this narrow chokehold

of vital shipping off the coast of Iran.

The U.S. Navy has again and again held major war games to plan for and stage just such a confrontation with Iran. The Pentagon has announced that it has already set targets on thousands of sites in Iran.

A video released to the media belies the very story that is being drummed up by the Bush administration. It shows five small open-air Iranian speedboats buzzing in the distance, far from the USS Hopper. Iranian boats have every right to patrol and defend their own coastal waters.

It should be noted that, according to the Pentagon’s own description, the USS Hopper is a guided-missile destroyer. It carries an M240 machine gun that can fire 10 armor-piercing projectiles per second and is capable of carrying nuclear missiles that can destroy whole cities. This high-tech ship weighs 8,373 tons and measures 504 feet in length. It was traveling in convoy with the USS Port Royal—a guided-missile cruiser that weighs 9,600 tons fully loaded and has a length of 567

feet and is also capable of firing Tomahawk cruise missiles—and the guided-missile frigate USS Ingraham, weighing 4,100 tons and measuring 445 feet in length.

These three deadly ships are just a small part of the U.S. Navy armada arrayed off the Iranian coast, which includes aircraft carriers that can carry out prolonged bombing missions. In addition, heavy armor and military supplies for the U.S. occupation in Iraq and other Gulf countries pass through the channel aboard U.S. Navy-owned, U.S.-flagged and foreign-flagged ships.

The Bush administration has continued to threaten Iran even since 16 of the top U.S. spy agencies publicly released a National Intelligence Estimate concluding that Iran has no nuclear program, at least since 2003, nor nuclear weapons. This NIE Report was a public rift within the top levels of the U.S. military and the ruling class, who are concerned that the Bush/Cheney push for a wider war involving Iran would boomerang.

The attempt by the administration to suppress the NIE Report and the fact that it was publicly released are signs of just how overstretched the Pentagon is as it

faces massive popular resistance in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

But Bush, speaking to the press after the release of the NIE report, could only say, “Iran was dangerous, Iran is dangerous, and Iran will continue to be dangerous.” Bush’s trip to the region is seen as another attempt to ratchet up a confrontation with Iran. Just before departing, Bush’s repetitive message was: “Iran was a threat, Iran is a threat, and Iran will continue to be a threat.”

## Gulf of Tonkin ‘incident’ in 1964

It is important to remember that the massive U.S. bombing of Vietnam and the Johnson administration’s escalation of the war was preceded by reports of an attack on a U.S. destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of Vietnam—which years later was finally admitted to be phony.

On Aug. 2 and 4, 1964, the Pentagon claimed that small Vietnamese boats had fired on the USS Maddox and another destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin. Lyndon Johnson used this “attack” as pretext for ramming a resolution through Congress giving him the power and funds to wage war on Vietnam.

Johnson’s own papers later revealed it was a fraud, and then Defense Secretary Robert McNamara admitted in the film “Fog of War” that the whole incident had been phony.

The U.S. military has prepared a plan to attack more than 10,000 possible targets inside Iran, which could destroy the country’s entire infrastructure.

Nearly all the Republicans and Democrats in both houses of Congress, including the present major contenders for the presidential nomination, voted for resolutions against Iran. In a staged or fraudulent confrontation with Iran, with wild charges from the corporate-owned media, Congressional opposition is highly unlikely.

It is vital that the anti-war movement be on full alert regarding the danger of wider war with Iran. It could well start, as it did in Vietnam, with a staged “provocation.”

As in both Vietnam and in Iraq today, once the Pentagon initiates a war of colonial conquest it can drag on for many years at a cost of millions of lives and untold destruction. But in the long run the popular determination to resist occupation is more powerful than the Pentagon’s deadliest weapons.

*Flounders is coordinator of the Stop the War on Iran Campaign, a project of the International Action Center.*



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# Behind the votes for Obama & Rodham Clinton

The surprisingly strong victory for Barack Obama in the Iowa caucuses and his close second to Hillary Rodham Clinton in the New Hampshire primary have put the campaign of the African-American senator from Illinois front and center on the U.S. political scene and put him neck-and-neck with Clinton. His results are all the more impressive because they take place in lightly populated states whose overwhelmingly white voters greatly underrepresent the big-city and suburban population centers of the country. With these contests showing that a large number of young white people are enthusiastic supporters of Obama, tens of millions of people who hadn't believed it possible that a Black man might be elected president in the racist U.S. now might think Obama could be the first.

None of this changes the basic truths about U.S. elections. The presidential contest remains firmly in the hands of the ruling class and their politicians in the two big capitalist parties, the Republicans and the Democrats. Who wins is closely related to the amount of money raised by the candidates and leaves him or her beholden to the ruling-class donors. Clinton and Obama have been the biggest fundraisers, even out-raising the Republican candidates. All the leading candidates of both parties have been firm defenders of U.S. imperialist interests and big capital all their political careers, still are, and can be expected to remain so.

Still, Obama's strong showing amid the large turnouts already has lessons about the mood of the population. Since Iowa is at least 92-percent and New Hampshire 94-percent white, it says little about nonwhite voters, who will be heard from in large numbers only on Jan. 19 and 26 in South Carolina, Jan. 29 in Florida and then on Feb. 5, the so-called Super Tuesday of primaries in more than 20 states.

The first lesson comes from the large turnout in Iowa for the Democrats, double the Republican turnout and almost double the Democrats' 2004 number. A high proportion of the participants were youthful voters. The high participation in the Democratic caucuses in Iowa by people calling themselves "independents," that is, not members of either party, reflects their strong revulsion to the Bush gang.

Many post-caucus analysts—including Obama and candidate John Edwards, who came in second in Iowa just slightly ahead of Clinton and a distant third in New Hampshire—said that Iowa showed the people wanted change and they were the candidates who most represented change. Disgust with the Bush gang on the one hand and

perhaps consciousness of impending economic difficulties on the other has moved the voting population somewhat to the left.

Those selecting Obama seem to be looking beyond his program. John Edwards has a program that is more pro-labor, pro-health care and anti-war than Obama. Hillary Rodham Clinton's domestic program is also more progressive than Obama's, although among many anti-war activists she is identified as an early supporter of the Iraq war who won't cleanly break with that position. The voters' perception of the candidates is not necessarily connected to the spoken or written promises. If they see Obama as an agent of change this appears to come from the image he projects.

Former Rep. Cynthia McKinney, who is running an independent progressive campaign in the Reconstruction Party and contending for nomination of the Green Party, was interviewed following the Iowa caucuses. She took a critical view of Obama's team and program, and what she believes could be a negative impact on the struggle for Black rights. McKinney points out that Obama's main foreign policy adviser is Zbigniew Brzezinski, the ultimate Democratic Party cold warrior.

Of course Clinton's foreign policy advisers, like Madeleine Albright and Richard Holbrooke, are the people who planned and executed the war against Yugoslavia. And McKinney doesn't let her and Edwards off the hook on this. But in discussing Obama, McKinney also notes that by playing down the differences in how Black and white are treated in the U.S., Obama does nothing to help, for example, the people displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina.

There is little doubt that an Obama campaign that looks successful will draw the fire of the most virulent racists in the U.S. This will happen even if the majority of the ruling class is content to have him run and even to win. Clinton, who has been in the public eye for 15 years, has already drawn the fire of the worst sexists and male chauvinists. It would be naive to think the reactionary Republican Party will campaign without trying to manipulate backward sentiments of racism and/or sexism.

With an Obama candidacy, working-class and revolutionary organizations will have to stay sensitive to the impact of racism on the electoral campaign, even as the left differentiates itself from Obama as well as the Republican. The left will also have to adjust its approach should there be an active intervention of the population in the electoral process, especially if an economic or war crisis arises during the election. □

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# AARON Moss

## a militant anti-imperialist into his 90s

By Mike Eilenfeldt  
New York

Dr. Aaron Moss died of pneumonia on Dec. 23 at the impressive age of 98. Moss had been a close friend of Workers World Party since the late 1980s, when he began attending meetings with his son, Jerry Moss.

Aaron Moss considered WWP's founding leader, Sam Marcy, to be a great Marxist-Leninist. Moss visited the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany, North Korea, Spain and Mexico and made many trips to Cuba. He spoke Spanish fluently and joined with members of WWP on the first Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan to Cuba in 1991, despite threats from the U.S. government to punish the comrades with heavy fines and expensive court battles.

Moss was a strong supporter of the Cuban Revolution, especially during the "special period" of economic and political crises triggered by the fall of the Soviet Union. He appreciated the great sacrifices that Cuba has made to deliver high-quality medical care to every citizen, despite the genocidal U.S. blockade.

Moss was a fervent anti-imperialist Marxist who thought of the WWP as his family. Each year on his birthday, he came to the meeting of the New York branch to make a generous financial contribution to the party and was honored in return. He attended numerous anti-war mobilizations and rallies and supported the Palestinian resistance.

Every year from 1998 until his death, he supported the annual National Day of Mourning action organized by the United American Indians of New England and helped pay for buses to Plymouth, Mass., where the event was held. Although nearly 90 at the time, he traveled to Puerto Rico in 2000 in solidarity with the people of Vieques, who were demanding that the U.S. Navy cease its practice bombing runs there and get off the island.

Moss's parents were Polish working class immigrants. Later in life he was able to discuss with his friends about how he and five siblings had grown up in a harshly abusive family environment.

He graduated from New York University in 1933, the depths of the Depression, with a degree in dental medicine and began his first practice in his mother's living room in Newark, N.J. During this period Moss joined the Communist Party; he remained a loyal member until the mid 1940s.

Jerry Moss recalls the day in 1945 when both his parents broke down in tears at the



news that President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a liberal Democrat whose presidency had encompassed both the Depression and World War II, had died. He also recalls that his father raised him not to accept the racist poison prevalent in capitalist culture.

Moss never gave up his socialist ideals, even when he was overwhelmed by inner conflicts and needed to leave

the CPUSA, his marriage and his profession to face them. He became an early authority on the use of hypnotism in dentistry, wrote the first book on the subject and toured the country giving lectures.

His interest in hypnotism stimulated a curiosity about his own unconscious mind. After years of frustrating attempts to overcome emotional illness with the aid of psychoanalysts, Moss abandoned the conventional life to embark on an odyssey that led him to Mexico and Spain in the 1960s. In this period of social and personal rebellion and turmoil, he became a suicidal escape artist, an atheist-rabbi, a self-styled hippie guru and an experimenter with various substances, to mention only a few of his adventures.

He also earned a PhD in psychology at the University of Malaga in Spain. Thousands of hours of self-analysis formed the basis for him to develop a self-help six-step method of analyzing dreams, combined with free association, to gain insights into the relationship between behavior, conscious thought and the unknown. The six-step method is outlined in his book "Self-Analysis for the Analyst." It explained his view that people are slaves to their unconscious minds, yet have the ability to change their behavior through sustained, systematic analysis that yields insights which otherwise would be beyond their reach.

The expatriate Dr. Moss returned to his home country in 1975 and took up residence in Manhattan to work as a therapist in his new field of analytic psychology. His friend Tibby Brooks jokes that Aaron nearly missed the boat as an activist. In 1982 the 72-year-old Moss was at first ambivalent about joining her Greenwich Village Peace Council. But he admired Brooks and she was able to persuade him to disregard his age and other problems for the sake of the anti-nuclear movement.

Always one to act on his beliefs, Moss even in his nineties traveled to Nevada to participate in a demonstration against nuclear testing. □

# Rainbow Solidarity

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This soon-to-be published work, a compilation of 25 articles from the Lavender & Red series in Workers World newspaper, shows how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love inherited from the colonial and imperial eras. The book shows the Cuban Revolution's trajectory of progress in hard facts. It's a must-read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice.

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# What lies behind rebellion of Latin American workers?

By Frederick Matteger

*Editor's note: Workers World has begun its 50th year of publication. Throughout the year, we intend to share with our readers some of the paper's content over the past half century. This article was originally published in Volume 1, on Aug. 1, 1959.*



WW in 1959

interest in the Bank of Nicaragua—so that Yankee capital could handle the money after it was loaned to Nicaragua! They also got a controlling interest in the main railroad.

The banking group then named themselves as directors of the bank at high salaries. Instead of paying interest, they charged for taking care of Nicaraguan government money. They charged again for paying it out. Nearly half the gross income of the railroad was paid out in dividends and profits. Marines shot rebelling Nicaraguans as the country was reduced to bankruptcy.

The same basic pattern of exploitation continues today. Only the methods are more sophisticated. Marines are no longer

in Nicaragua but an ex-U.S. officer trains Nicaraguan troops to protect U.S. property. You hear about “U.S. aid,” but this means loans with loan shark conditions.

The International Monetary Fund supposedly makes loans to help undeveloped countries. Actually, under the sheep's clothing of this high-sounding “Fund” are the oil company wolves.

The Monetary Fund sends experts to the needy country. These experts never advise loans to build basic industry so the country could really get on its feet. They advise “austerity.” This means, in short, raising the prices of food so that the workers won't be able to eat so much.

These experts also advise signing over the oil rights to the American oil monopoly—at the same type of ruinous conditions used 40 years ago in Nicaragua.

But now our brother workers in Latin America have begun to organize. They've thrown out some of the worst of the Wall Street puppets. Others are going to follow.

It should be recognized that this is only a beginning. Throwing out a Batista—or a Trujillo—is a first step. Next must be the seizure of the sugar lands, the oil wells, and the factories by the workers. If this step is not taken, Wall Street will retain and reinforce its grip.

We North American workers must realize that the struggle of our fellow workers in Latin America is our fight, too. Only by joining with them and with all the workers of the world can we drive the full power of our fist into the fat belly of the American capitalist class. □

Our fellow workers in Latin America are angry. They have reason to be.

See how you'd like this general picture of a Latin American worker's life:

If you're lucky enough to have a union it's under attack or being smashed. The best you can afford in housing is a crowded hut without the simplest conveniences. You have enough money only for the cheapest foods—like beans and corn. Milk is too expensive for even the kids, since a Rockefeller company forced out local dairies and then raised the price. (Venezuela)

Around you, American companies (Rockefeller, Morgan, Mellon, Dupont) own the wealth and the best of everything. They own the sugar lands, the oil wells, the factories, the mines. If you work for them, they pay pennies. If you buy from them, they charge high. They know you've no place else to go. They get you both ways. And on top of this, prices keep going up.

“Book value” of Wall Street investments in Latin America at the end of 1956 was \$7 billion. The U.S. Department of Commerce booklet which gives that information rushes on to assure us that it's really much more.

Yearly profits of American companies in Latin America, officially given as something over one-half billion, are actually several billions, extracted in a variety of concealed ways.

Forty years ago American capitalists saw, and hungered for, the wealth of Nicaragua. They moved in and started gobbling it up in the following way:

A liberal Nicaraguan president had attempted to cut off the concession of an American-owned mining company. The principal stockholder of this company was an ex-U.S. secretary of state. U.S. Marines were sent in and a clerk of this same mining company was installed as president.

The puppet president then “accepted” a loan from Wall Street with ruinous conditions. The Wall Street banking center acquired, among other things, controlling

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## Rebeliones surgen luego del asesinato de Bhutto

# Pakistaníes culpan al régimen auspiciado por EEUU

Por Deirdre Griswold

La crisis en Pakistán ha entrado en una nueva y más aguda etapa con el asesinato de Benazir Bhutto, jefa del Partido del Pueblo Pakistaní, que había regresado del exilio apenas dos meses antes. Ella fue asesinada el 27 de diciembre mientras pasaba por una gran concentración de gente que le daba la bienvenida en Rawalpindi luego de un mitin político.

El régimen del General Pervez Musharraf en Islamabad al igual que el de George W. Bush en Washington, se apuraron a acusar a militantes islámicos del brutal asesinato.

Sus declaraciones no lograron convencer al público. Hasta los periódicos imperialistas en los EEUU y en Bretaña tuvieron que admitir que el pueblo pakistaní había culpado directamente al gobierno de ser responsable de la muerte de Bhutto.

Manifestaciones y confrontaciones con las fuerzas armadas del estado siguen a través de Pakistán. Las manifestaciones masivas de indignación popular han enfocado su ira contra las oficinas del gobierno, del partido dominante de Musharraf y contra los símbolos de las élites militar y súper rica, incluyendo a cientos de oficinas bancarias. Cincuenta y ocho personas han muerto, mayormente por tropas y paramilitares disparando al pueblo.

Una videograbación privada del asesinato transmitido ampliamente en los medios noticieros pakistaníes y en el extranjero, incluyendo el canal 4 británico, muestra a Bhutto ultimada por balas asesinas antes de que estalle una bomba cerca de su carro, contradiciendo así la versión oficial de que ella había muerto, no por balas, sino por haberse golpeado la cabeza con la palanca del techo corredizo del carro después de estallar el artefacto. Los militares rehusaron permitir una autopsia, pero los doctores en el hospital donde la trataron dijeron que parecía que había muerto por disparos a la cabeza.

En un mensaje de correo electrónico enviado en octubre después de un fallido atentado contra ella, Bhutto dijo a una amiga británica que si algo le ocurriera a ella, la responsabilidad recaería en Musharraf.

### EEUU apoyó dictaduras militares

Pakistán, un importante cliente de los EEUU y aliado en la Guerra Fría comenzando en los años 1950, ha estado bajo dominación militar durante la mayoría de este tiempo y ha recibido miles de millones de dólares en ayuda y equipo militar. Sin embargo, entre los golpes de estado hubo cortos periodos de gobierno civil electo. El padre de Bhutto ocupó el puesto de primer ministro durante uno de esos; fue derrocado por un golpe militar y más tarde ahorcado. Benazir Bhutto sirvió dos veces como primera ministra –desde 1988 hasta 1990 y entre 1993 y 1996, cuando fue destituida de su cargo acusada de corrupción

y enviada al exilio.

El General Musharraf, el más reciente en una serie de dictadores militares, se apoderó del poder en un golpe de estado en 1999 pero después reinventó su dominio creando un partido político y ganando la presidencia en una elección considerada generalmente como fraudulenta. Durante estos ocho años, la pobreza de las masas se ha profundizado mientras mucha de la riqueza del país ha ido a la élite militar. Musharraf mismo ha sobrevivido varios intentos de asesinato.

Después del 11 de septiembre, Musharraf fue obligado por la administración de Bush a unirse a la guerra “contra el terrorismo” de Washington. Esto antagonizó a muchos en este país mayoritariamente islámico, a pesar de que en la opinión de Washington no hacía lo suficiente para apoyar la guerra encabezada por los EEUU en Afganistán. El 24 de septiembre de 2006, Musharraf dijo al show “60 Minutes” de la cadena CBS que oficiales de los EEUU habían amenazado abiertamente con bombardear a Pakistán hasta dejarlo “en la edad de piedra” si no cooperaba más vigorosamente con los planes de guerra de Washington.

Durante el último año, sus fuerzas militares llevaron a cabo una masacre en una escuela musulmana en el mismo Islamabad y también lanzaron ataques contra poblaciones en el noroeste, donde hay una fuerte oposición a la guerra de EEUU en el vecino Afganistán.

La oposición al gobierno de Musharraf se volvió tempestuosa esta primavera y verano después de que los jueces de la Corte Suprema de Justicia desafiaron su autoridad, decretando que él no podía postularse de nuevo para presidente mientras encabezaba las Fuerzas Armadas. Hubo manifestaciones y huelgas alrededor del país. Las protestas fueron brutalmente suprimidas por el estado y miles de personas, incluso abogados y juristas fueron detenidos por demandar el fin de la ley marcial y la restauración de la democracia.

Musharraf despidió a los jueces y nombró una Corte Suprema nueva, cuyos miembros hicieron lo que les fue mandado y decidieron que la “reelección” a presidente, que había transcurrido durante el boicot de la oposición, era válida, mientras él (Musharraf) oficialmente dejara de usar el título de comandante

de las fuerzas armadas, lo cual hizo. Así se preparó la fase para las elecciones parlamentarias, que fueron programadas para el 8 de enero, pero las cuales el régimen de Musharraf anunció el primero de enero que serían postergadas hasta febrero.

### El acuerdo que fracasó

El regreso del exilio de Bhutto en octubre había sido negociado por la administración de Bush, la cual consiguió de Musharraf un acuerdo para anular las acusaciones de corrupción. Un artículo en el Washington Post del 28 de diciembre describió cómo la Secretaria de Estado Condoleezza Rice, su poderoso diputado John Negroponte y el Embajador a la ONU Zalmay Khalilzad pensaron que habían arreglado un acuerdo por medio del cual Bhutto y Musharraf compartirían el poder en un gobierno de coalición que

continuaría cooperando con Washington. Bhutto, dijo el artículo, había estado de acuerdo en que aviones estadounidenses podían bombardear objetivos en el territorio noroeste de Pakistán, un bastión del movimiento islámico opuesto a las guerras de Washington en Afganistán e Irak.

El propósito era el de mantener a Musharraf y las fuerzas militares en el poder, pero dándole Bhutto una cara más democrática al gobierno.

“La administración concluyó en el verano, que un acuerdo para compartir el poder con Ms. Bhutto pudiera ser la única manera que el General Musharraf no fuera derrocado,” escribió contundentemente el New York Times el 20 de octubre.

Desde el momento en que Bhutto regresó a Pakistán en octubre, sin embargo, quedó claro que Musharraf no tenía ninguna intención de cumplir su palabra en cuanto a este acuerdo.

En su primer acto público, en una enorme concentración en Karachi el 18 de octubre, Bhutto apenas escapó de ser asesinada por una poderosa bomba que mató a 150 personas, 50 de ellas, sus guardias de seguridad. En ese entonces, el gobierno también culpó a militantes islámicos, pero los seguidores de Bhutto

dijeron a los reporteros que la electricidad en toda la zona se había apagado justamente antes de que hubieran estallado las bombas, y culparon al régimen.

Bhutto entonces fue detenida y confinada a su casa, desde la cual continuó denunciando a Musharraf, demandando que él renunciara a su puesto como líder de Pakistán. Su valor a enfrentarse frente a las reales amenazas a su vida aumentó el apoyo de las masas.

El PPP se reunió días después del asesinato de Bhutto y eligió a su hijo de 19 años, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, y a su marido, Asif Ali Zardari, para encargarse del liderazgo del partido, manteniendo así esta rica dinastía en control del partido más grande de Pakistán.

Se espera que el PPP gane la mayoría de los puestos en las elecciones parlamentarias — si las permite el gobierno.

Nawaz Sharif, líder de la Liga Musulmana de Pakistán, quien fue el primer ministro hasta que fue derrocado por el golpe de Musharraf en 1999, ha llamado a que el general renuncie inmediatamente de la presidencia para que “un gobierno de consenso nacional” pueda ser formado.

La administración de Bush está ahora apurándose por tratar de volver a

unir las piezas de su política. Su intento de crear un gobierno de coalición entre la dictadura militar y la oposición burguesa falló miserablemente. Después de años de apoyo de Washington a Musharraf, demandando aún que él sea más brutal contra sus percibidos enemigos, los sentimientos contra los Estados Unidos son más fuertes que nunca en Pakistán, tanto entre las fuerzas islámicas como entre las seculares.

La ya arruinada credibilidad de Washington con sus “amigos” ha terminado. ¿Quién entre las muchas figuras políticamente exiliadas alrededor del mundo confiaría ahora en su seguridad?

La situación parece estar lista para que los movimientos masivos de Pakistán demanden un fin a los acuerdos secretos, un fin a la intervención imperialista, y a la creación de un gobierno soberano verdaderamente democrático que esté comprometido a usar los recursos de la nación para cumplir con las necesidades urgentes del pueblo pakistaní de nutrición adecuada, vivienda, educación y cuidado de la salud.

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